

MAN IN THE DARK

It was dark as Danny walked along one side of the Portakabin yard.

He was determined not to go in. However much he yearned to. If he went in there and was caught, his parents would kill him.

With no other way to go, he walked through a ginnel to what looked like a set of small industrial units. They also bordered the City Stadium's car parks. Maybe Danny could watch from here without having to trespass. There must be somewhere that wasn't private property.

Coming round the corner and into the industrial

area, he was struck by a vivid memory. This car park was where his dad used to leave the car. When his dad was still able to drive to the football.

Danny stopped still for a moment. In his mind, he saw his dad reverse the car into a space among all the other cars. City stickers on windscreens. Scarves hanging out of windows. Dad making sure Danny was safe. He was young then. Six or seven. Before Dad had the accident.

Danny didn't know whether to smile or cry. He wished he could call his dad and tell him where he was. To enjoy the memory. But he wasn't really sure that Dad would want him here, even if he wasn't doing anything wrong. Not *really* wrong.

Then he saw a gap. Between two of the industrial

units. A metre or so across, it was wide enough to walk down. And it was dark, shaded from the street lights by two roofs overhead that seemed to meet above the gap.

And at the other end of the alley: a clear view of the City Stadium. And he was not trespassing.

Perfect. He could watch from here. Maybe get some photos, even though it was dark.

If he could just get some shots of people, put them up online and see if anyone knew who they were, he could start to solve this mystery.

But then something moved.

At first Danny thought it was a dog.

But this was not a dog; it was a person.

Danny stepped back.

The person had stopped moving.

What if it was a policeman?

Again.

That would be it. He'd be in so much trouble.

With everyone. But a policeman would be walking *towards* Danny. This person was squatting at the end of the alley, not moving.

Danny wondered what to do.

Go away? Leave whoever it was to whatever they were doing?

Say hello? Maybe it was a journalist doing what Danny himself was planning on doing. And, if it was, that could be useful. Really useful.

Then another possibility came into his mind. Maybe someone was injured. Or in trouble.

Danny decided to say something. If he could help, he would. But what he really wanted was to see out of the end of this alley and gather information.

Danny stepped forward, letting his eyes adjust to the dark.

‘Hello?’ he said.

No answer.

‘Hello?’ Louder this time.

The figure moved, as if trying to hide.

‘Can I help you?’ Danny said. ‘I mean, are you all right?’

The figure moved again. Rocking, it seemed. Then on his feet.

Danny saw him come closer. They could look into each other’s eyes now. But neither of them spoke.

It was a boy. He was somewhere between sixteen and seventeen, black with shaved hair. He was short, a bit smaller than Danny. And his eyes were wide and full of life.

Danny stepped back. Partly to allow the boy to come out of the alley. Partly because he was afraid of what was going to happen next.